

136 DOMESTIC LIFE AND ECONOMY

241 [41] the midst of the grain crops to support them. The cut crops which are to be threshed are stacked on the wooden platforms prepared before sowing, in beehive shaped stacks, called *pañi* by the Hill Marias and *kupa* in Halbi.

[784] [476] The women prepare the threshing-floor (*asrama* in the hill dialect), clearing a piece of ground near the stacks of grain, and plastering it with mud. In the centre of this the men erect a thick bamboo railing on posts. It is *polo* for women to take part in the actual threshing. Oxen are never used. For each cultivator in turn, beginning with the *asraya-gaita*, all the men and boys in the village combine to thresh (*wisma*). They range themselves in two rows facing each other, with the bamboo railing between them.¹ Holding this with both their hands and supporting themselves by it, they dance up and down, rubbing the ears of corn between their feet. They thresh in this way only *adon*, *huthi*, rice, *ghatha*, *chikma* and *kikha*; the women pick the ears of grains like *hang* and *bayra* in baskets, and rub them in their hands to extract the grain. The cultivator whose grain is being threshed is expected to feed all the villagers helping him for that day, and if possible to give them a good drink of *salphi*, the fermented sap of the sago palm (*Caryota urens*; Maria, *garga marra*), which is raised from cuttings in large numbers all over the Hill Maria country. The threshed grain is winnowed by men only, winnowing being as taboo to women as sleeping in the fields or threshing. One man stands on a rough wooden platform and pours the grain from a basket held above his head, while another, if there is not wind enough, winnows the falling grain with a basketry winnowing fan of the usual Indian type (*ket* in Maria). All the men and women of the village combine to carry the threshed and winnowed grain of each cultivator to his compartment in the long granary. They never measure their produce, but there is no taboo on this account; it simply is that they grow crops for their own sustenance, and not for sale, and it is easy to see whether the grain garnered is adequate for the coming year or not. They do indeed understand something of bazaar measures, for some of their pulses and oil seeds are sold annually to raise the money needed to pay their poll-tax; they make their own measures of basketry, with different traditional shapes for each kind of produce that they sell; and at the bazaar you may see them measuring out their produce in these in front of the Hindu tradesmen to whom they are selling it. Their measures are very accurate, and need never be challenged. If they make them a little too large, they plaster a little mud over the bottom to reduce the capacity.

• 804

¹ I have since seen *adon* and *huthi* threshed in the same way by Korkas on the Betul border of Hoshangabad District, Central Provinces.

MANUFACTURES

175

The favourite basketry material is bamboo, in thin strips varying from half an inch to three-quarters in width. Occasionally the wefts are of reed, coloured twine, or bamboos pared down to the thickness of twigs. Patterns are produced by using warps of dry bamboo strips from the heart-wood, and wefts of green strips from the outer rind. Nearly all the Hill Maria basketry is twilled, with each weft passing over and then under two or three warps, the topmost edge or rim being twilled-twined with a weft of thin bamboo pared to the size of twigs; and sometimes an ornamental plaited ring is worked around the central circumference. The measure baskets made by the Hill Marias and brought by them to the markets for sale or for measuring out the grain which they sell or the salt which they buy are of different shapes and sizes for each commodity. The grain measure is a *dhurki*, eight of which make a *soli*² or half a *seer*, i.e. a measure containing about a pound's weight of rice. There are slightly different sizes for rice, *kutli*, mustard and pulses, according to the size of the different grains; all *dhurki* measures are little round baskets with slightly convex bottoms and uniform in diameter at top and bottom. For salt, a rather similar basket called a *lockli* is made, sufficient to hold one pice worth of salt, of roughly the same capacity as a *dhurki*; they are graduated for smaller quantities by being plastered inside with varying quantities of mud or cow-dung. *Makus* flowers are measured by being heaped on shallow dishes called *kurli*, shaped like inverted cones or Annamese hats; each should contain 4 *pailli*, or 128 *dhurkis*, and those that I tested were remarkably accurate. The Hill Marias sell also the flat basket dishes already referred to, but rather larger than those they use for their own plates; they are called *bediya*.

Frequent mention has already been made of the Maria blacksmiths, and some of their tempering and manufacturing methods have been described in the section dealing with iron-work weapons and tools. These blacksmiths appear to be of Maria stock, speaking the Maria language, indistinguishable physically, having the same phratries and clans, and following the same customs. Enquiry in the big blacksmith settlements at Bagmandi Panera in Jagdalpur tahsil, at Kamargudem below the Arampur ghat in Korta tahsil (both Bison-horn blacksmith villages), and from the Hill Maria blacksmiths at Nugur in Kutru samindari, showed in every case that some of the blacksmiths either had themselves once been cultivators or had fathers who were originally

² 5 *hala* or Government *rupess* weight of rice is contained in one *dhurki*: 8 *dhurkis* = 1 *soli*, 4 *soli* = 1 *pailli*, 2 *pailli* = 1 *ori*, 2 *ori* = 1 *kurli*, 20 *ori* = 1 *dhanda* = 40 *pailli*.